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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y - TEXT

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ZI](#)
SUBJECT: MUTAMBARA OUTLINES STRATEGY ON MDC SPLIT.
CONFRONTING GOZ

Summary

¶1. (C) Arthur Mutambara, the recently elected president of the pro-Senate faction of the MDC, told the Ambassador on March 27 that he favored reunification but stressed that what separated his faction from that of Morgan Tsvangirai was values, especially democracy and the use of violence. Mutambara said he was "rebranding" his MDC to present a more nationalistic and African-centric image to prevent ZANU-PF from monopolizing the liberation war legacy. Saying that Zimbabweans must accept blame for the economic collapse, Mutambara declared that both a homegrown recovery plan and reengagement with donors were vital to recovery. To confront the regime, Mutambara said he would embrace a broad array of activities, including demonstrations, but would do so more effectively than the MDC had done in the past. End Summary.

Democracy and Unity

¶2. (C) In their first meeting, Arthur Mutambara along with much of his faction's leadership (including Vice President Gibson Sibanda and Secretary General Welshman Ncube) declared to the Ambassador that his party was the legitimate Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). That said, Mutambara outlined three potential solutions to the MDC divide. The most preferable outcome, in his opinion, was reunification. However, if that was not possible, Mutambara favored an amicable divorce in which both sides shared party assets and

adopted new party names. If neither of these options worked, Mutambara was prepared to go to court and let the ZANU-controlled judiciary determine the fate of the opposition parties.

13. (C) According to Mutambara, none of these outcomes, however, precluded a fourth option: eventual reunification in the future, perhaps ahead of the next national elections still scheduled for 2008. Mutambara agreed with the

Ambassador that there was little difference between the two factions on most issues. Moreover, Mutambara said he honored "Brother Morgan" as a hero of the democratic struggle. However, he said that there were marked differences over what he called "values." Terming Tsvangirai and his faction undemocratic and prone to the use of violence, Mutambara said the opposition would have "no moral authorityQ8 to engage Mugabe if they were guilty of excesses among themselves. Mutambara added that western supporters of the MDC must "help us help ourselves" by openly criticizing undemocratic tendencies among the anti-Mugabe forces.

----- An Opposition Party Facelift -----

14. (C) Displaying his business management background, Mutambara told the Ambassador that he was "rebranding" the pro-Senate faction of the MDC in an effort to learn from past mistakes in which the party "played into ZANU-PF hands." Mutambara said that Mugabe's sole remaining sources of

legitimacy domestically and internationally were his liberation war credentials, stance on land reform, and anti-imperialist rhetoric. Mutambara said his party needed to undercut these pillars and reclaim these themes from Mugabe.

15. (C) With that in mind, Mutambara said the liberation war tradition belonged to all Zimbabweans, that his party also favored land resettlement that "was not driven by white farmer interests," and that the pro-Senate faction embraced anti-imperialism and would place African interests first. Noting that perceptions became reality, he said that the label given it by Mugabe and others as a supposed British (N.B. and American) puppet had stuck and had been the party's "kiss of death" both domestically and within the region. Cautioned by the Ambassador that nationalist and anti-imperialist themes could be misperceived as anti-Western sentiments, Mutambara said he took the point and tried to clarify that he did not intend to be confrontational or to lead a campaign against the U.S. but rather to co-opt ZANU-PF slogans and expand the MDCQ,s appeal.

----- Looking Inward, Reaching Out for Economic Revival -----

16. (C) Mutambara agreed with the Ambassador that ZimbabweQ,s economic meltdown offered an opportunity for the opposition. He said that his partyQ,s economic platform began from the premise that Zimbabweans had to accept responsibility for the economic collapse rather than simply blame it on sanctions or other exogenous factors. On that foundation, a homegrown Q&holisticQ8 reform program could be developed which would address all aspects of the economic downturn, such as skyrocketing inflation, the ever-sliding currency depreciation, and the massive quasi-fiscal deficit.

17. (C) With a country rich in land and human capital, Mutambara said that Zimbabweans should dream of becoming the Singapore of Africa. However, in today's global economy, no country could develop economically without foreign assistance

and investment. Mugabe's form of economic nationalism was a thing of the past. Zimbabwe needed to reengage the IMF and World Bank for assistance on reforms and in that regard Mutambara said he agreed wholeheartedly with the Ambassador's formulation: "rescue requires reform." In response, the Ambassador noted that rebuilding domestic investor confidence was perhaps even more important in the near term as a means to encourage the highly-skilled diaspora to return and reinvest their funds and their talents.

Thinking Strategically About Confrontation

¶8. (C) Presenting his plan to confront the regime, the former student leader said the pro-Senate faction would embrace a broad spectrum of activities. He supported demonstrations, but argued that the opposition must be prepared with a "plan B, C, D, and E" if demonstrations failed. Talk about "the final push" (N.B. the MDC's failed mass action campaign in 2003) and "short and sharp" (N.B. Tsvangirai's latest call for mass action) efforts to topple

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the regime were premature; the battle was a marathon, not a sprint. Looking long-term, his party would push for a new constitution before the next national elections currently due in 2008. If that failed, Mutambara said they would push for a free and fair election, and would prepare a fall back plan if the GOZ continued to rig the ballot.

Comment

¶9. (C) In a point-by-point address that had clearly been honed by making the diplomatic and civil society rounds over

the past month, Mutambara lived up to his reputation as a fiery opposition figure with a globalist view. It remains to be seen if Mutambara can translate his obvious energy into concrete steps forward. However, we are hopeful that the emergence of two "MDC" parties may advance Zimbabwe's struggle for democracy by attracting a wider "readership" across the political spectrum.

¶10. (C) That said, we remain struck by a strong sense of dQjQ vu. Only a few years ago, Tsvangirai was coming to us with virtually the same entourage to profess a renewed energy and commitment to the struggle against ZANU-PF. However, it is widely believed that it was this same entourage that sapped that energy. We cannot help but suspect that the unexpected show of solidarity from the assembled management team might have been an effort to keep the newly-elected leader in check. His stance on many issues directly contradicts the stated positions of ostensible backers Ncube and Sibanda, with whom there are already rumblings of discontent.
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